

THE U.S. SOY SUSTAINABILITY ASSURANCE PROTOCOL

What is the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol?

- The U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) is a protocol that outlines the regulations, processes, and management practices that ensure sustainable soy production on the vast majority of U.S. soybean farms.
- It is a national-based system of sustainability and conservation laws and regulations combined with careful implementation of best production practices on more than 300,000 U.S. soybean farms.
- The SSAP aggregates how U.S. Soy farmers contribute to the improvement of environmental, social, and economic sustainability outcomes.
- The SSAP’s quantifiable and results-driven approach was developed through a multi-stakeholder process – including participants across the entire value chain. It is regularly reviewed and updated.

How is the SSAP Audited?

- Each year, farmers participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm program conduct internal audits and provide documentation of compliance.
- More than 20,000 third-party independent audits of farmers are conducted annually by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agents.

What are the directives of the SSAP?

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Biodiversity and High Carbon Stock. To enhance biodiversity, soybeans are not produced on wetlands, grasslands, forests, and other designated protected areas.
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Production Practices. Production practices work to enhance the environment as well as protect natural resources while increasing production efficiency.
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Public and Labor Health and Welfare. The U.S. public and its workers are protected under U.S. laws providing for fair labor standards, equal employment opportunities, abolition of forced labor, clean water act laws, and so forth.
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Continuous Improvement. Sustainability is more than a result; it is a process. Each year, U.S. Soy farmers become more efficient and environmentally sound through continuous improvement of their farming practices.

U.S. Soy Sustainability Goals

U.S. Soy farmers’ commitment to sustainability is a long-term promise rooted in conservation programs created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture over 75 years ago and defined by continuous improvement. U.S. Soy and partner organizations are dedicated to focusing resources on research, outreach, and measurements to stay true to this promise of sustainable farming.

The United Soybean Board (USB), American Soybean Association (ASA), and the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) created a national strategy for further enhancing U.S. Soy sustainability. Using year 2000 as a benchmark (from the Field to Market National Indicators Report), U.S. soybean farmers aim to achieve the following by 2025:

- **Reduce land use impact by 10%** (measured as acres per bushel)
- **Reduce soil erosion by 25%** (measured as tons per bushel)
- **Increase energy use efficiency by 10%** (measured as BTUs per bushel)
- **Reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by 10%** (measured as pounds CO₂-equivalent gasses emitted per year)

U.S. Soy Sustainability Achievements:

Since 1980:¹

- 60% irrigation water use efficiency improvement per ton of production
- 48% land use efficiency improvement in hectares per ton of production
- 46% energy use efficiency improvement per ton of production
- 43% greenhouse gas emissions efficiency improvement per ton of production
- 34% soil conservation improvement per hectare per year
- 94% crop yield increase in tons per hectare



Producer actions associated with the SSAP supports many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but especially SDG2.4 – Sustainable Food Production and Resilient Agricultural Practices.

Why is the SSAP valuable?

Product sourcing has become a key part of many companies' commitments to sustainability. Sourcing requirements focus on environmental and social issues and lead to positive impacts on business performance. The SSAP provides credible data and information to provide buyers of U.S. Soy confidence that the product they are purchasing is produced in a sustainable manner. When purchasing soy verified with the SSAP, your business is fulfilling a commitment to sustainable product sourcing.

The SSAP is widely recognized and positively benchmarked against the:

- European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC) 2021 Soy Sourcing Guidelines
- Global Seafood Alliance Best Aquaculture Practices
- Tokyo Olympic Procurement Committee
- Consumer Goods Forum
- SAI Platform's Farm Sustainability Assessment 3.0 (FSA) – Silver Equivalent



Between 1982 and 2017, the amount of cropland in the U.S. decreased by over 21.3 million hectares, while forest land has increased by 2.1 million hectares.²

8.4 million hectares are removed from production to protect the environment in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).³

More than 18.2 million hectares of production land are enrolled in the USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).⁴

USDA invests approximately US \$6 billion annually in agriculture conservation efforts, including staffing over 2,500 conservation offices employing 10,000 individuals in conservation and compliance.⁵

See for yourself how U.S. Soy is sustainable by downloading the SSAP and registering to receive SSAP certificates at ussec.org.



¹Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, 2021. Environmental Outcomes from On-Farm Agricultural Production in the United States (Fourth Edition). ISBN: 978-0-578-33372-4.

²U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2020. Summary Report: 2017 National Resources Inventory, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, DC, and Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/2017NRI_Summary_Final.pdf

³U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. Conservation Reserve Program fact sheet. End of October 2020. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Conservation/PDF/crp-one-pager-oct-2020.pdf>

⁴Communication with NRCS Technical Staff

⁵NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>

About U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC): Soybeans are the United States' No. 1 food and agricultural export. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is focused on building preference, improving the value, and enabling market access for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in 82 countries across the world. USSEC is a dynamic partnership of U.S. soybean producers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations; and connects food and agriculture industry leaders through a robust membership program. USSEC is farmer-funded by checkoff funds invested by the United Soybean Board, various state soybean councils, the food and agriculture industry, and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). To learn more, visit www.ussec.org and www.ussoy.org, and engage with us on USSEC's LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and U.S. Soy's LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

